

From: Climate Action Plan Coalition

To: Montgomery County Council President Evan Glass

Cc: Montgomery County Council Members:

Gabe Albornoz, Marilyn Balcombe, Natali Fani-Gonzalez, Andrew Friedson, Will Jawando, Sydney Katz, Dawn Luedtke, Kristin Mink, Laurie-Anne Sayles, Kate Stewart

Re: FY24 Proposed Budget

Date: April 12, 2023

Dear President Glass,

We have reviewed the County Executive's proposed FY24 operating budget and are writing to support the many robust actions he proposes to address the current and future effects of climate change in Montgomery County. That said, we were hopeful that the FY24 budget would have added additional funding for a few other items, given the climate emergency that our region faces. Attached to this letter is our original request to Executive Elrich. We are writing this letter to identify areas that we are asking you to improve.

We support as a baseline the Executive's proposed operating budget including \$10.3M for DEP and 5 additional FTEs¹ plus 4 FTEs² transferred from the Non-Departmental Account and the CEX account; we support the \$3M in CIP for trees and \$17M CIP for electric buses. We almost missed the fact that his budget includes \$1.1M for the Office of Food System Resilience which, technically, should have been in the cross-departmental climate budget - and which we heartily support. In addition, we are pleased to see increased investments in trees, RainScapes, solar, electrification, equity, and attention to resilience. In sum, this is a robust budget.

We also note that the Executive added funding for the Office of People's Counsel for the first time in more than 10 years. The CAP Coalition knows that land use is key to controlling climate change and, after working with the Planning Board staff on the climate assessment template, we have begun following their zoning and master planning efforts. We have come to appreciate the complexity of land use planning and would find a People's Counsel invaluable. We support this budget line item.

However, the County is NOT on track to reach its climate emergency goal. While this budget reflects great work, this level of funding will still not be enough.

We understand that the County will have \$86M more than what is required for the reserve fund. Given that we are in a climate emergency of momentous proportions, we ask that that County Council significantly increase the climate-targeted budget to accelerate the transition to a county

¹ (1) Solar Technical Program Manager; (1) Residential Electrification Program Manager; (2) new Grants & Incentives Program Managers; (1) Program Manager position for Tree and Forest programs;

² Transfer from NDA: (2) new Zero Waste Planner positions; (1) Residential Electrification Program Manager; Transfer from CEX to DEP: (1) Data Analyst

that reduces overall energy consumption, maximizes development and use of renewable energy sources, aggressively expands forest and tree cover, invests in its farming community especially for food crops, and inspires the public to make climate-smart choices every day.

Here are our specific requests:

- 1) The County government cannot achieve our greenhouse gas reduction goals without more involvement of the public. It is essential that we convey the importance of choices that only individuals can make, including lifestyle changes that can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions – i.e., alternative transportation modes and fuels, reducing dependence on fossil fuels for residential energy, reducing consumption, achieving zero waste, etc. Accordingly, public outreach is a huge part of what we think is needed. We have advocated for more outreach since 2020. We believe that we need a massive public outreach campaign to meet our goals. Unfortunately this is the area with the lowest allocation in the proposed budget. **Therefore, we urge you to add \$2M for a massive public outreach campaign to promote behaviors that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve resilience.**
- 2) Zero Waste: The County Executive has ambitious plans to significantly reduce the amount of waste produced across all sectors centered around ending the climate-damaging incineration of easily recoverable materials, particularly food scraps, plastics, and other recyclables. However, the number of staff needed to implement these plans is inadequate. We see that the Executive proposes to add two new positions for waste reduction efforts and one for a multi-family recycling specialist. **We request adding a total of five new positions (rather than only 3) to develop and implement new waste reduction, reuse and recycling programs, and to enforce recycling laws.**
- 3) In 2023 the County authorized \$1M for a residential electrification retrofit pilot. We strongly urge the Council to heavily invest in energy efficiency and electrification retrofits for low- to middle-income households and multi-unit residential complexes that serve primarily low- to middle-income tenants and condo owners. This will ensure that lower income buildings gain the benefit of upgraded service without raising the cost of housing. **Therefore, we strongly urge the Council to add at least an additional \$1M for a total of \$2M or more per year.**
- 4) We have also recently learned that the Parks Department budget is receiving \$4 million short of what is needed, reflecting only a 4% increase as compared to the rest of the county budget which is receiving an average 7% increase. Maintaining parks and natural areas is an important part of sequestration, stormwater management, resilience especially to heat, public outreach opportunities, and more. Accordingly, to ensure that the contribution of sequestration and adaptation services provided by the Parks Department does not decline, and since the County surplus exceeds what is needed for its reserve balance by \$86M, **we request that \$4M be added to the Parks Department budget.**
- 5) We are happy that the Green Bank is now able to help fund resilience. Our concern is that, without adding more funds, there is a risk that the Bank may start using some of the existing \$19M from the county's energy utility tax to support resiliency rather than its

intended use for building energy efficiency and electrification efforts. While our request to double its portion of the energy tax was not accepted, ***we look forward to working with you to identify ways to create more leverage and infusion of funds for Green Bank resilience efforts.***

Council members, let us reiterate - the fact that we are in a climate emergency is not just a slogan. We know you read the news everyday of accelerating ice sheet loss, historic droughts and massive rainfalls, forest fires, coastal inundation...and the heart breaking disasters befalling the most vulnerable. It is time to step up our game, and get serious about addressing the climate emergency. Please add the resources needed to accelerate our progress on this vital issue.

We would be happy to meet with you and other Council members to discuss our request, including how we can finance what is needed to truly meet our climate emergency goals.

On behalf of the MoCo Climate Coalition (formerly, the Climate Action Plan Coalition),

The Coordinating Committee:

Nancy Beller-Simms, Sebastian Gordon, Karl Held, Karen Metchis, Doris Nguyen, Kevin Walton

MoCo Climate Coalition member organizations and individuals

350 Montgomery County;	One Montgomery Green (OMG);
Ask the Climate Question (ACQ);	Poolesville Green;
Bethesda Green;	Safe Healthy Playing Fields;
Biodiversity for a Livable Climate;	Sugarloaf Citizens' Association;
Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN);	Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee (TPMEC);
Elders Climate Action;	The Climate Mobilization Montgomery County (TCM);
Environmental Justice Ministry Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church;	Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended/M-83 (TAME);
Environmental Study Group;	Zero Waste Montgomery County;
Friends of Sligo Creek;	
Glen Echo Heights Mobilization;	
Green Sanctuary Committee of the Unitarian-Universalist Church of Silver Spring;	Carol Jones
Montgomery County-Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions (MCFACS);	Deborah Cohn
	Stuart Simon
	Hokuma Karimova
	Jim Driscoll

attachment: Budget request addressed to Executive Marc Elrich, January 18, 2023.